

2022 SPRING WILD TURKEY HARVEST

ACTIVITY:

In 2022, Delaware's spring turkey hunting season ran from 9 April to 7 May, with a youth/non-ambulatory hunt day on 2 April. Only bearded birds may be legally harvested. Private land hunters were allowed to hunt all 25 days of the season; public land hunters were selected through a preseason lottery to hunt one of four, week-long season segments (A, B, C, & D) during the same 25-day period (no Sunday hunting). Mandatory check stations were established to collect biological information from all harvested birds.

REMARKS:

In 2022, 567 Wild Turkeys, (*Meleagris gallopavo*) were reported harvested, down 45 birds from the 2021 season ($n = 612$; Figure 1.1). For the purposes of harvest reporting, Delaware is divided into 4 management regions, comprised of 18 wildlife management zones (Figure 1.2). Similar to the 2021 season, all regions fell in the same order with the Interior region having the highest harvest. The Interior region (i.e., Zones 2, 4, 6 – 8, and 10) accounted for 48.4% ($n = 273$) of the total harvest. The Southern region (i.e., Zones 11 – 17) harvested the next greatest proportion of birds (36.9%; $n = 208$). This was followed by the Bayshore region (i.e. Zones 3, 5, and 9) and consisted of 13.5% ($n = 76$) of the state's harvest. Lastly, the northern region (i.e., Zones 1A and 1B) harvested, 1.2% ($n = 7$) of the total state harvest. 3 birds were harvested from unknown locations due to data collection errors when the hunter registered the turkey. The Bayshore region harvested 3 more turkeys than the previous year, but all other regions declined in harvest. Reported harvest was greatest in wildlife management Zone 6, which accounted for 14.9% ($n = 84$) of the total harvest (Figure 1.3)

Most harvested birds were taken from private lands (82.7%, $n = 469$). The harvest of 98 (17.3%) turkeys on public lands was lower than 2021 by a 2 percent share of harvested wild turkey vs. private lands, but remains historically high. The top four public lands for harvesting a Wild Turkey in 2022 were: Redden State Forest ($n = 18$, 18.4%), Norman G. Wilder Wildlife Area ($n = 12$, 12.3%), Midlands Wildlife Area ($n = 8$, 8.2%), and Blackiston Wildlife Area ($n = 7$, 7.1%, Table 1.1).

During Delaware's annual youth/non-ambulatory turkey hunt, 28 birds were harvested, up 12% from the previous season's 25. Of the 28 turkeys harvested during youth weekend 2022, 42.9% ($n = 12$) were harvested on public lands. By week during the regular season, 47.3% ($n = 268$) of the total birds harvested were taken in Week 1; 18.3% ($n = 104$) in Week 2; 12.9% ($n = 73$) in Week 3; and 16.6% ($n = 94$) in Week 4 (Figure 1.4). This suggests an increasingly higher harvest early in the turkey season vs. later.

Adult birds comprised 76.7% ($n = 435$) of the harvest, with more jakes recorded than the previous year ($n = 132$, 23.3%).

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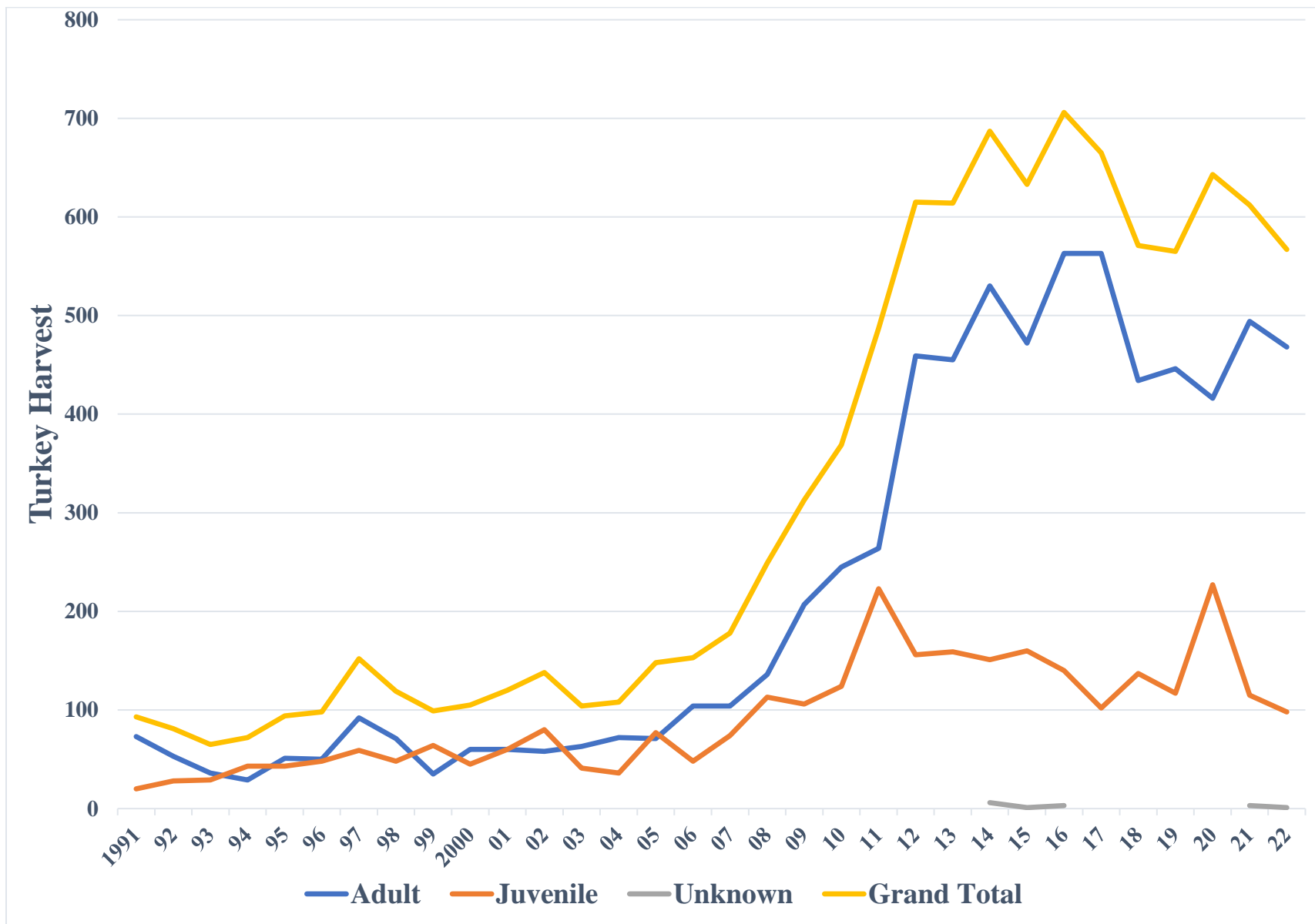


Figure 1.1. Annual harvest of Eastern Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) in Delaware from 1991 – 2022 classified by age groups (i.e., adult, juvenile, and unknown).

Table 1.1. Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest distribution among DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Agriculture Forest Service owned public lands hunted during the 2022 Delaware spring turkey season. Public lands harvest data from 2014 – 2021 are also displayed.

Public Land	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Assawoman Wildlife Area (WA)	2	2	2	2	3	2	5	3	2
Augustine WA	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	1	1
Blackiston WA	6	4	4	6	7	4	9	6	7
C & D Canal WA	7	6	7	3	7	8	9	8	5
Cedar Swamp WA	2	3	5	4	3	4	3	3	6
Eagles Nest WA	2	2	1	3	2	3	4	5	2
Industrial Forest WA – Barr & Laurel	1	3	3	1	1	2	3	0	4
Little Creek WA	6	7	3	8	5	2	2	5	4
Marshy Hope WA	1	2	2	4	3	2	4	3	0
Midlands WA	5	5	5	11	8	4	4	9	8
Milford Neck WA	1	2	5	4	4	5	4	8	4
Nanticoke WA	1	1	2	3	2	1	3	5	4
Norman G. Wilder WA	12	9	12	12	10	11	6	12	12
Old Furnace WA	3	1	3	3	5	1	5	3	3
Prime Hook WA	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Tappahanna WA	2	2	3	6	4	3	3	4	4
Ted Harvey Conservation Area	1	1	1	4	3	2	6	1	1
Woodland Beach WA	3	3	0	0	3	3	2	2	3
Blackbird State Forest	2	0	8	9	8	7	7	12	5
Redden State Forest	23	12	21	22	15	12	21	19	18
Taber State Forest	3	1	0	1	1	4	2	2	5
Total	83	66	88	106	95	81	106	112	98

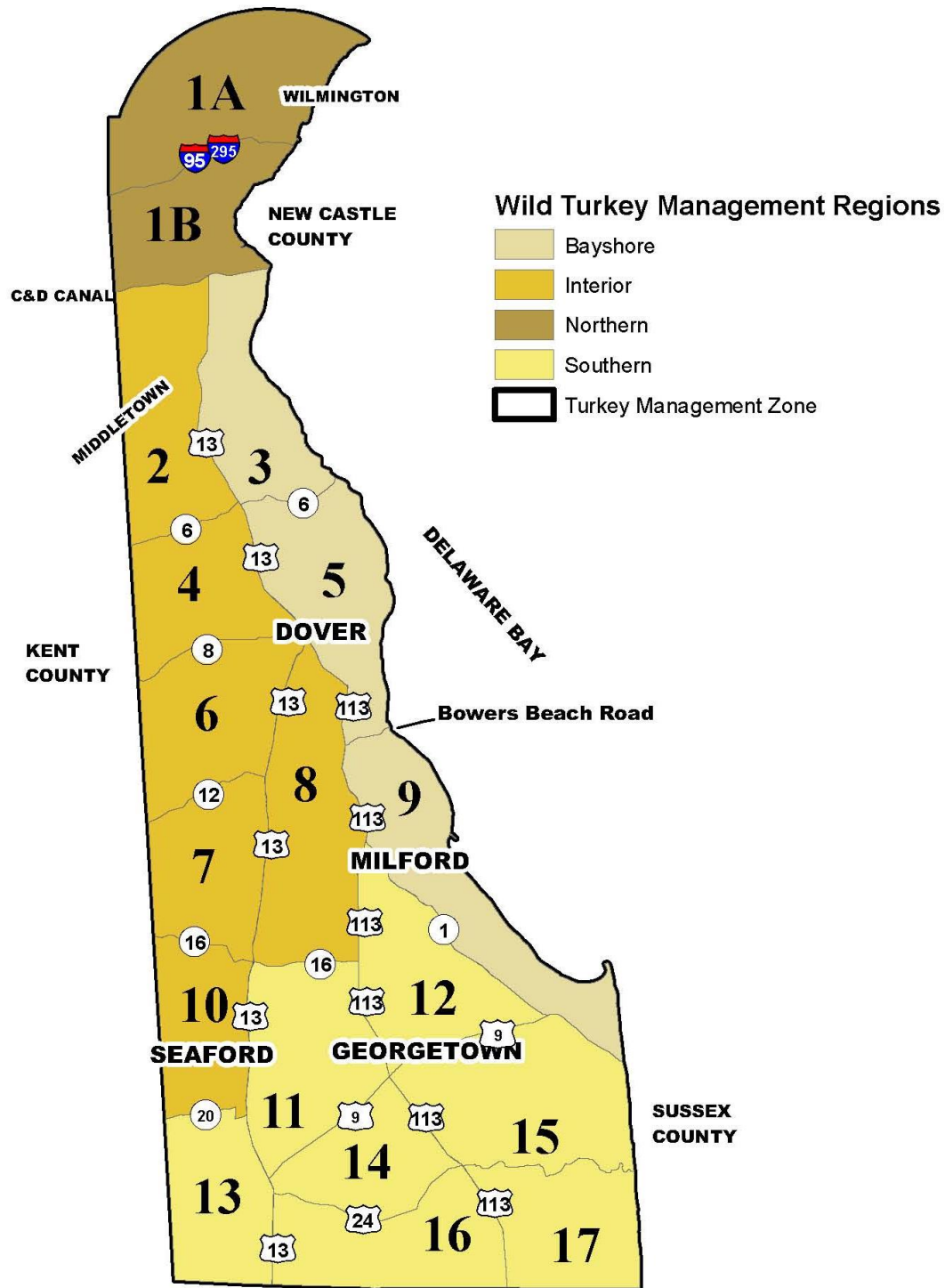


Figure 1.2. Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) management regions (Bayshore [tan], Interior [amber], Northern [light brown], and Southern [yellow]) and associated management zones (1A, 1B, and 2 – 17) in Delaware.

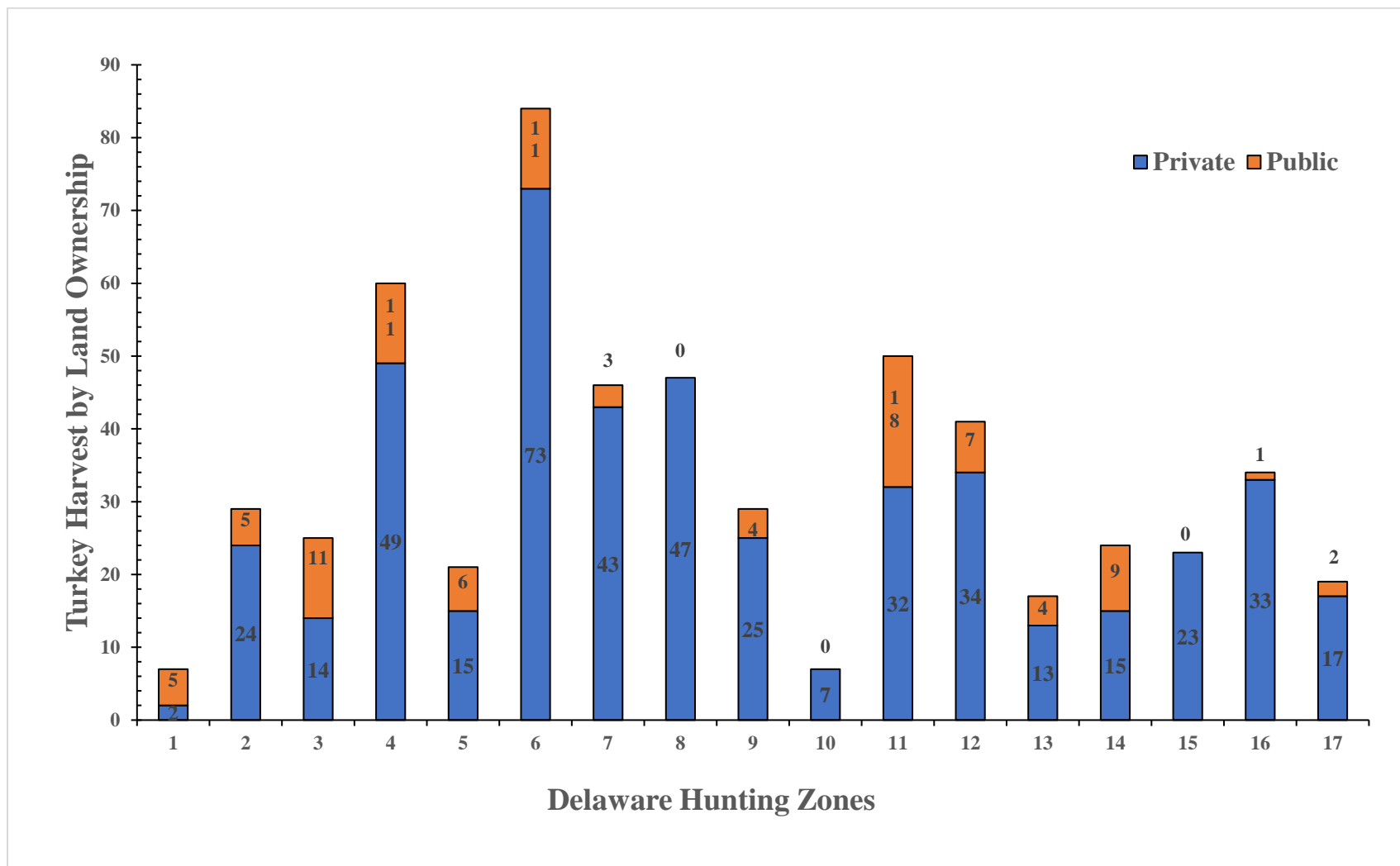


Figure 1.3. Spring 2022 Delaware Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest on public and private lands by hunting zone.

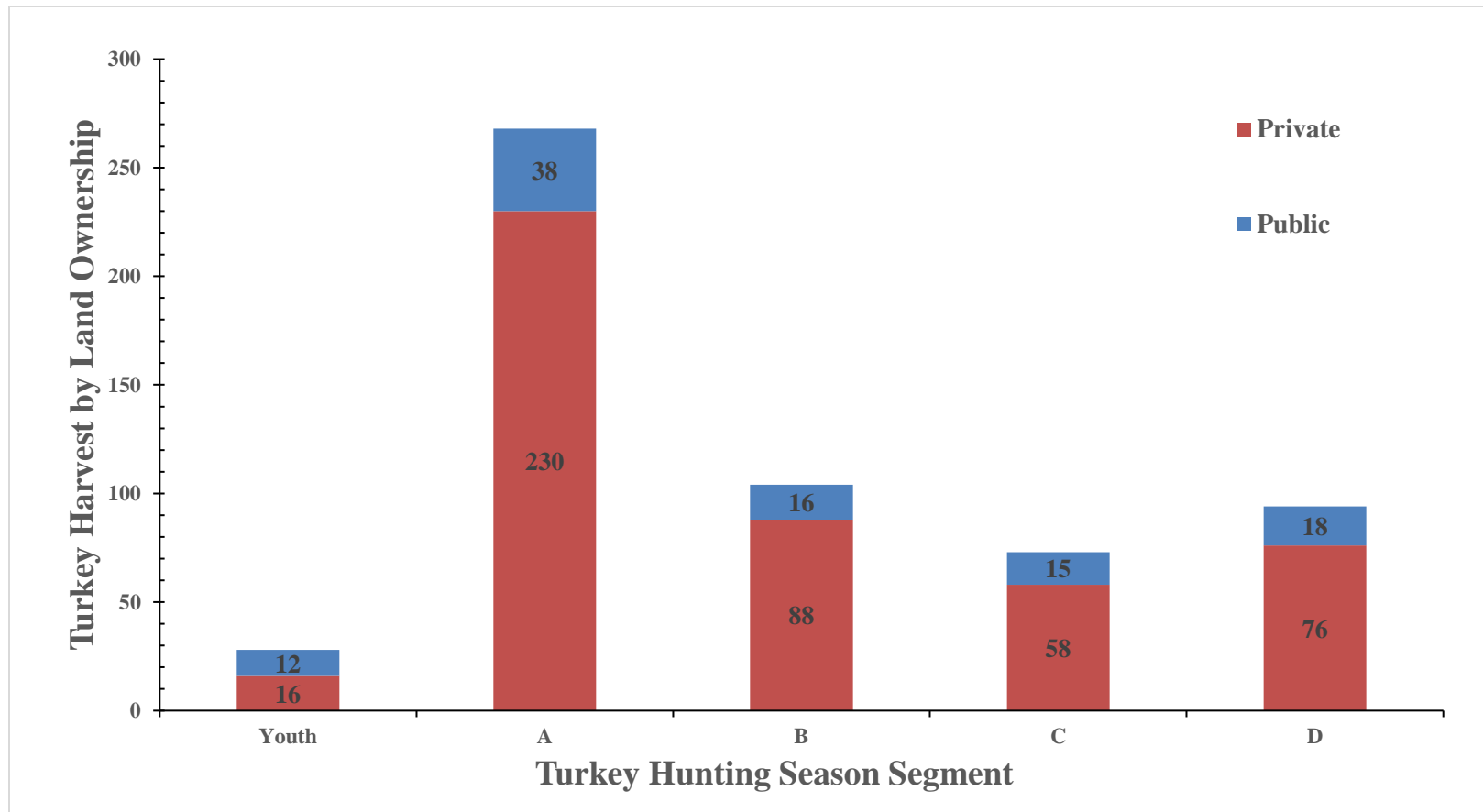


Figure 1.4. Spring 2022 Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) harvest by week on public and private lands. Including youth (2 April, 2022) and regular seasons (9 April – 7 May, 2022).

2022 SUMMER TURKEY PRODUCTIVITY SURVEY

ACTIVITY:

Since 2010, the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife has used a volunteer-based survey to record observations of Wild Turkeys across the state during the months of July and August. The primary purpose of this survey is to generate an index of annual turkey productivity and recruitment, expressed as the ratio of observed poults (young) per hen (adult female). In addition, data will be used to track the health and distribution of the turkey population, as well as, evaluate potential regional differences in reproductive success within Delaware.

Participants were asked to record observations of turkeys in the months of July and August during the course of their daily activities. Using a Division-provided data sheet, participants recorded the date and number of gobblers (adult male), hens, and poults seen during each observation (Figure 2.1). If the participant was unable to distinguish age/sex of the birds, they were recorded as “unknown.” Effort was made to instruct observers to avoid documenting multiple encounters with the same flock or brood of birds during the survey period. Participants were also asked to record the Turkey Management Zone (TMZ) in which each encounter occurred; Delaware is divided into 18 TMZs (Figure 1.2).

REMARKS:

As a result of low staff availability, the 2022 turkey productivity surveys were not conducted. With an increase in staff currently unlikely, we intend to resume productivity surveys in 2023.

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**DELAWARE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
WILD TURKEY OBSERVATION SURVEY FORM**

SURVEY PERIOD: JULY 1 – AUGUST 31

OBSERVER INFORMATION		INSTRUCTIONS				
Name:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each time you see turkeys, record the date, county, and number of adult hens, poults (young of the year), & adult gobblers. Record ALL turkeys seen, not just broods. Use additional sheets if necessary. Please record the turkey management zone in which your observation was made. REFER TO INCLUDED MAP. AVOID REPORTING DUPLICATE SIGHTINGS (e.g. if you see the same number of hens and poults in the same location several days in a row, only record once). If you cannot determine sex or age, record them in "UNKNOWN" column – that information is still important. Either mail, fax, or email the survey by September 10 to: Gary Macy Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife 6180 Hay Point Landing Road Smyrna, DE 19977 Fax: 302.653.6755 Email: Gary.Macy@delaware.gov 				
Address:						
Phone:						
Email:						
DATE (month/day)	COUNTY	TURKEY MGMT ZONE <i>(refer to map)</i>	NUMBER OF TURKEYS OBSERVED <i>(Record ALL turkeys seen, not just broods)</i>			
			HENS	POULTS	GOBBLE RS	UNKNOWN

Figure 2.1. Wild Turkey, *Meleagris gallopavo*, observation survey form during survey period of 1 July – 31 August 2022.